



Real news from the streets

March 29, 2017

Dear Chair Greenlick, members of the committee,

My name is Israel Bayer. I am the Executive Director of the Portland area newspaper called Street Roots.

For those of you that are unfamiliar with Street Roots, we are an award-winning street newspaper that serves people experiencing homelessness and poverty. Street Roots has a readership of nearly 20,000 readers in the Portland region. Our distribution method is to provide jobs and some income to the population we advocate for.

I am here to support this bill on behalf of people experiencing homelessness. My point of view is very straightforward, cell phones are one of the most important possessions people in my community have. They provide individuals and families access to jobs, caseworkers, caregivers, landlords, doctors and loved ones.

On multiple occasions in my work I've witnessed individuals having access to a cell phone has helped save people's lives. It's not uncommon that individuals on the streets find themselves in extreme duress and have to be able to reach first responders, staff at social services agencies or loved ones immediately.

I also know that these phones are paid for by the federal government and should be common in our community. Many individuals experiencing homelessness have access to these phones due to the hard work of CareOregon. Saying that, far too many folks in our community do not have the phones they are entitled to because of the barriers to accessing these phones.

It just shouldn't be this hard to get people who really need and depend on this program what they need. It's my opinion that we all collectively should be allowing for the easiest access to these phones for people experiencing homelessness. They will save people's lives, literally.

Israel Bayer
Executive Director
Street Roots

Mission: Street Roots creates income opportunities for people experiencing homelessness and

poverty by producing a newspaper and other media that are catalysts for individual and social change.